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SUBJECT: DFM MANJGALADZE EXPRESSES GOG CONCERN OVER UNSYG
REPORT ON ABKHAZIA

11. Summary: On July 27, Deputy Foreign Minister Giorgi Manjgaladze called a meeting of the Group of Friends of the Secretary General to express Georgia's concerns about the UN

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Secretary General's interim report on the situation in

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Abkhazia. German, Russian, British, U.S. representatives attended. Manjgaladze said that while the Georgian government appreciated the comprehensive nature of the report, they had two major concerns: one, that the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia and the Group of Friends are focusing too much on technical issues and not enough on broader strategic goals like the resolution of the conflict and return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Abkhazia; and two, requested that the Group of Friends and UNOMIG continue the investigation into the March 11 attack on Georgian government buildings in Kodori. German Ambassador Flor, speaking on behalf of the Friends, assured Manjgaladze that they would communicate his message to their respective capitals and stressed that it was also important to raise these concerns with Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jean Arnault, as the report was a UN responsibility. End Summary.

Group of Friends "losing the forest for the trees"

12. Manjgaladze began the meeting with some faint praise of the report, calling it "comprehensive," and saying that it reflects most of the main issues dealing with resolution of the conflict. He also noted that it was the first UN report to properly identify the government of Upper Abkhazia by its official name, which, he said, reflects an acknowledgment of the situation on the ground. Georgian concerns were twofold. First, he said, UNOMIG and the Group of Friends were "losing the forest for the trees" by focusing too much on technical issues and not enough on strategic goals like the resolution of the conflict and return of IDPs. Recent attempts by the Abkhaz de facto authorities to privatize and sell IDP property in violation of Georgian law, he said, emphasized the need for an energetic response from the Group of Friends on IDP return. (Note: Manjgaladze reiterated in a separate meeting to the whole diplomatic corps July 30 that acquisition of Georgian property in Abkhazia is illegal and risky to the investor. End note). He said that these strategic goals have become of secondary importance to the Group of Friends, which has instead focused on troop movements and checkpoints. This was unacceptable to the Georgian government, he said, because there was already a framework in place for resolving technical issues.

13. The second Georgian concern was the investigation into the March 11 attack on Georgian government buildings in the

Kodori Gorge. According to Manjgaladze, the inconclusive nature of the report was a "dangerous development," because there was nothing in the report to assign responsibility and consequences for the attack, which could lead to further provocations. He called the attack an act of war against Georgia and said the international community needs to show that they are willing to pursue the perpetrators and punish them. He said the Georgian government was strongly requesting the Group of Friends and UNOMIG to continue the investigation until it produces conclusive results. He also called on the Russian side to be more cooperative with the investigation. If they do not, he said, then Georgia could hardly see Russia as a member of the Group of Friends.

14. Speaking on behalf of the Friends, German Ambassador Flor assured Manjgaladze that they would communicate his message to their respective capitals, but that they had no official reaction at that time. She said that the Friends shared Georgia's approach on the need to look at the larger picture, noting that the Friends' February Non-Paper addresses the strategic goals mentioned by Manjgaladze. She added that it was also important for the Georgian government to raise their concerns with SRSG Arnault, as the report was a UN responsibility. Manjgaladze replied that the Georgian government does not see the Group of Friends and UNOMIG as separate, but they would of course raise it with Arnault as well.
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